

SOME NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

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THE plant-hunter whose range of observation is restricted by the force of circumstances to a distance of not more than a day's journey to and from his home, and more often to a half-day's outing, gradually finds that his well-gleaned fields no longer offer him the novelties which once rendered buoyant his steps and cheered the long homeward walk with pleasing anticipation of what some new discovery would prove to be. After several excursions in which nothing new is added to his lists, however interesting and profitable they may be in other ways, his waning interest is one day suddenly revived, and his enthusiasm rekindled, as he comes across not only one new plant, which ordinarily would be satisfactory enough, but upon a numerous company of weeds, many of which he has never before seen. They prove to be a colony of recently introduced plants, and although these newcomers are regarded by some as of little account, and stigmatized as interlopers and vagrants, they are welcomed by the local botanist, affording him glimpses of the vegetation of distant regions which he can never expect to visit.

These enterprising plants, not contented with the means furnished by nature for their dissemination, have in these later days taken to travelling by rail. They suddenly appear in vacant lots around freight yards, along railway banks, and on city dumps, with perhaps the best intentions of settling down for a permanent residence and the praiseworthy purpose of covering unsightly places with their verdure. Their reception, however, is not very cordial. The hand of man is against them, and they do not tarry long with us. The space they occupy is wanted for other purposes, and, like the Wandering Jew, they are soon forced to move on; their coming and their going noted, however, with pleasure by the few observers interested in such things.

A company of these tramps of the vegetable kingdom has during the last three years taken up a temporary abode on a railway bank at Dedham, Mass. Here they have flourished luxuriantly during the summer until the annual mowing of the weeds in August by the railway men, to which has been added the present year the burning over of the locality, so that it is probable that most of these chance visitors will be found here no more. In view of the certain extirpation of this interesting botanical settlement, many of the species having already

succumbed to the fierce attacks made upon them, a record of some of the plants found here may be of value.

Salsola Kali, L., var. *Tragus*, Moq. (the Russian thistle). This was first observed here by the writer, August 22, 1897, when two bushy plants about a foot high were seen. It has since shown a tendency to increase, twenty plants having been counted the present season, August 4, a few of them three hundred feet distant from the original location. The plants first seen were quite different in general appearance from *Salsola Kali*, the seashore species. They were bushy-upright, their slenderer, greener leaves and stems contrasting strongly with the decumbent, coarse, succulent plant of the seashore. Later plants, however, seem to have changed their habit somewhat, by becoming more prickly and prostrate, and now as it grows along the gravelly railway track does not appear so very different from the species of which it is probably only a variety. In this connection it may be stated that in the *Journal de Botanique*, 1887, p. 281, M. Constantin records the fact that when *Salsola Kali* grows along river banks away from the sea it loses the fleshy character of its leaves and passes into the var. *Tragus*. This locality, with the one reported in RHODORA, Vol. I, p. 47, by Mr. J. F. Collins, at Providence, R. I., appear to be the first records of the arrival in New England of this western pest.

Bidens bipinnata, L. (Spanish Needles), was found growing abundantly on the occasion of a visit made October 2, 1898. Its tufts of prickly-barbed awned akenes made it a conspicuous object amidst the other plants. It was apparently of short life here, none having been seen by the writer since.

Ambrosia trifida, L. (Great Ragweed). Numerous plants of this species, some of them attaining a height of seven feet, have been seen on every visit during the last three years. It presents a striking appearance, with its large three-lobed leaves, and, although coarse and rough, it is an interesting plant when seen for the first time. Although pronounced common in the Manuals, it is a rare plant in eastern Massachusetts, occurring only on waste ground, where it is doubtless introduced from the West.

Xanthium strumarium, L. (Cocklebur). A few plants of this not very common species were seen in mature fruit, October 2, 1898. It is easily distinguishable from the much more common and similar plant, *Xanthium Canadense*, Mill., by its smaller bur, which is at

maturity about one half the size of the latter, and by its nearly glabrous surface, the bur of *X. Canadense* being densely hispid. *Xanthium spinosum*, L. (Spiny Clotbur) was also noticed here.

Chenopodium ambrosioides, L. (Mexican Tea). Never before has the writer seen hereabouts what could unhesitatingly be pronounced this species. Its very leafy spikes, nearly entire upper leaves and repand lower leaves, presenting a different looking plant from the one with naked elongated spikes and coarsely toothed leaves known as the var. *Anthelminticum*, Gray, which is so common on waste grounds around Boston. There were, however, some plants growing with it of an intermediate character, showing that the two plants are not specifically distinct.

Sisymbrium altissimum, L., was very abundant the present summer. When mature it loses all its leaves, leaving only a mass of long, stiff, slender pods, which stand out in all directions from the stem and branches.

Berteroa incana, DC. (Hoary Alyssum). This grows abundantly on a grassy bank and along the roadside in the immediate vicinity of the railway.

Conringia perfoliata, Link., which escaped the notice of the writer, was collected here June 27, 1897, by Mr. E. F. Williams.

Verbena bracteosa, Mich. Two specimens of this western plant were collected August 4.

Hibiscus Trionum, L. (Bladder-Ketmia), a branching annual with an inflated calyx, was also among the strange plants found.

In addition to the above list, nearly all of which were collected by the writer for the first time, there were noted the following plants that are more commonly found in this part of the State:

Cenchrus tribuloides, L., *Echinospermum Lappula*, Lehm., *Lithospermum arvense*, L., *Stachys palustris*, L., *Ricinus communis*, L., *Galeopsis Tetrahit*, L., *Solanum rostratum*, Dunal., *Amarantus blitoides*, Watson, *Artemisia vulgaris*, L., *Lactuca Scariola*, L., *Galinsoga parviflora*, Cav., var *hispida*, DC., and *Lechea maritima*, Leggett.